

**SANCTUARY IN MORE'S  
THE HISTORY OF KING RICHARD III**

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More uses the debate concerning sanctuary to discredit the usurper Richard. Sanctuary serves two functions: protection from danger and communion with the deity. Mircea Eliade claims that "sacred space" is a locus for organizing our worlds, and sanctuary is such a place. Sacred space organizes the ordered, and holy from disordered, secular space. For the Christian world, sanctuary also represents Christ's sacrifice by providing an escape from retribution. Consequently, violating sanctuary carries severe penalties and is analogous to disrupting an ordered universe. More's portrayal of Richard's violation of sanctuary shows him not only threatening political stability but also the divinely ordered universe.

**Key words:** sacred space, Christian world view, Westminster Abbey, Tudor history, English law, divine right of kings.

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*Pour discréditer l'usurpateur Richard, More utilise le débat concernant le droit d'asile. Le sanctuaire qui jouit de ce droit remplit deux fonctions: mettre à l'abri du danger et mettre en communion avec la divinité. Mircea Eliade définit "l'espace sacré" comme un lieu où s'organisent nos univers, et c'est bien ce qu'est le sanctuaire. L'espace sacré est un espace ordonné, ce qui le distingue de l'espace profane, qui est désordonné. En chrétienté le sanctuaire représente aussi le sacrifice du Christ, grâce auquel on peut échapper au châtimeut. En conséquence, violer le sanctuaire fait encourir des peines sévères, car c'est comme si l'on dérangeait un univers ordonné. Lorsque More décrit Richard en train de violer le sanctuaire, il le désigne comme menaçant non seulement la stabilité politique, mais aussi l'ordre divin de l'univers.*

**Mots-clés:** espace sacré, vision chrétienne de l'univers, Westminster Abbey, l'histoire des Tudor, droit anglais, droit divin des rois.

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Para desacreditar al usurpador Richard, More utiliza el debate que concierne el derecho de asilo. El santuario que goza de este derecho ejerce dos funciones: poner el abrigo del peligro y poner en comunión con la divinidad. Mircea Eliade define "el espacio sagrado" como un lugar en el que se organizan nuestros universos, y es bien eso el santuario. El espacio sagrado es un espacio ordenado, lo que lo distingue del

espacio profano, que es desordenado. En cristiandad el santuario representa también el sacrificio de Cristo, gracias al cual se puede escapar al castigo. En consecuencia, violar el santuario hace incurrir en penas severas, pues es como si se desarregrara un universo ordenado. Cuando Moro describe a Richard violando el santuario, lo designa como amenazando no solamente la estabilidad política sino también el orden divino del universo.

**Palabra claves:** espacio sagrado, visión cristiana del universo, Westminster Abbey, la historia de los Tudor, derecho inglés, derecho divino de los reyes.

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Although scholars naturally view More's *Richard III* differently, their main point of agreement is that it is not objective history but rather an attempt to shape historical events to show that Richard III was a tyrant.<sup>1</sup> More clearly abhors tyranny, and one of the most effective ways in which he discredits Richard is to portray him as a breaker of sanctuary. Of the 93 pages in Richard Sylvester's Introduction to the Yale edition of *Richard III*, 18 pages deal with the issue of sanctuary, and this incident becomes one of the focal points

<sup>1</sup> For example, Arthur Noel Kincaid, "The Dramatic Structure of Sir Thomas More's *History of King Richard III*," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 12.2 (Spring 1972): 223-42; Alison Hanham, *Richard III and His Early Historians: 1483-1535* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 152-90; and Retha M. Warnicke, "Tyranny and Sacrifice in More's *Richard III*," in *Perspective as a Problem in the Art, History, and Literature of Early Modern England*, ed. Mark Lussier and S. K. Heniger (Edwin Mellen, 1992), 75-80, emphasize the dramatic aspects of *Richard III*. See also Walter M. Gordon, "Exemplum Narrative and Thomas More's *History of King Richard III*," *CLIO*, 9.1 (Fall 1979): 75-88 and A. F. Pollard, "The Making of Sir Thomas More's *Richard III*," in *Historical Essays in Honour of James Tait*, ed. J. G. Edwards, V. H. Galbraith, E. F. Jacob (Manchester: Printed for the Subscribers, 1933), 223-38. On the other hand, Elizabeth Story Donno, "Thomas More and *Richard III*," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 35.2 (Autumn 1982): 401-47, sees *Richard III* as a "virtuperatio" (419). Michael Bennett, *The Battle of Bosworth* (New York: St. Martin's, 1985), calls it "a Renaissance morality play (7)." Robert E. Reiter, "On the Genre of Thomas More's *Richard III*," *Moreana* 25 (February 1970): 5-16, argues that More writes an "inverted panegyric" (6). Daniel Kinney, "Kings' Tragicomedies: Generic Misrule in More's *History of Richard III*," *Moreana* 86 (July 1985): 128-50, sees *Richard III* as a tragicomedy. Patrick Grant, "Thomas More's *Richard III*: Moral Narrative and Humanist Method," *Renaissance and Reformation*, 7.3 (August 1983): 157-72, suggests that More's work is a moral narrative. Peter L. Rudnytsky, "More's *History of King Richard III* as an Uncanny Text," in *Contending Kingdoms*, ed. Marie-Rose Logan and Peter L. Rudnytsky (Wayne State UP, 1991), 149-72, argues it is in the genre of the Freudian uncanny. And Richard S. Sylvester, "Introduction," *The History of King Richard III*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester, *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 2, (Yale UP, 1963), refers to More's work as an *exemplum* (cii). See also Sister Mary Faith Schuster, "Philosophy of Life and Prose Style in Thomas More's *Richard III* and Francis Bacon's *Henry VII*," *PMLA*, 50 (1955): 474-87.

of the narrative.<sup>2</sup> By first understanding the tremendous importance of sanctuary for the culture of the time, we can also understand its role in *Richard III* and how More uses Richard's violation of sanctuary to portray the king as spiritual destroyer of the realm.

## I

Studies of the historical and legal aspects of sanctuary in England have so far generally not investigated the psychological reasons for its existence nor, more importantly, its spiritual meaning to the culture of the time.<sup>3</sup> Sanctuary had two major functions: first, it was a place where people could escape physical dangers, and second it provided contact with the deity, functioning as an intercessor between the mortal and the immortal. But sanctuary was not unique to English law or even to Christian law; it has existed in many cultures and has had similar functions. In Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, Orestes flees the Furies and takes refuge in the sanctuaries of both Apollo and Athena. Similarly, accounts of the sacking of Troy portray Cassandra seeking protection at the altar of Athena. In addition, the Greeks received oracles at the sanctuary of Apollo. On the other hand, in ancient Israel the roles of sanctuary were separate: the Ark of the Covenant (and later the Holy of Holies) fulfilled the role of intercessor, while the cities of refuge provided physical protection.<sup>4</sup>

Christian sanctuaries, like the one in *Richard III*, partake of both the Greek and Judaic versions. Cities of refuge were established, and sanctified structures existed to provide protection and divine communion. Robert E. Rodes, Jr. suggests several reasons for sanctuary's existence in the Christian world:

<sup>2</sup> CW2, 24-42. All quotations from *Richard III* are from this edition and cited by page number in my text, spelling and punctuation modernized.

<sup>3</sup> See Samuel Pegge, "A Sketch of the History of the *Asylum*, or *Sanctuary*, from Its Origins to the Final Abolition of It in the Reign of James I," *Archaeologia*, 8 (1787): 1-44; Thomas de' Mazzinghi, *Sanctuaries* (Stafford, England: Halden, 1887); Norman MacLaren Trenholme, "The Right of Sanctuary in England: A Study in Institutional History," *The University of Missouri Studies*, 1.5 (February 1903): 298-430; J. Charles Cox, *The Sanctuaries and Sanctuary Seekers of Mediaeval England* (London: George Allen, 1911).

<sup>4</sup> See Exodus 21:13, Numbers 35:11-34; Deuteronomy 4:41-3, 19:3-9; and Joshua 20:1-9. Compare also the case of Adonijah in 1 Kings 1:50-53.

[T]he sanctuary of the church served a twofold purpose of mercy; the unjust marauder was deterred from his wicked purpose by the awe of the Divine Presence, and the seeker of just vengeance was brought to exalt mercy over justice and to make peace with his adversary. In an age of disorder, then, the church had in the law of sanctuary a practical mitigation consonant with the legal system into which it was introduced and a graphic representation of the tranquility and good order of the things of God, as contrasted with the turbulence of secular society.<sup>5</sup>

Christian sanctuaries were particularly representative of a Christian universe, because, according to Christian doctrine, God's abode is a place that provides an escape from earthly troubles. But more than this, sanctuary was representatively Christian. Just as Christ takes away the sins of the world, so also does sanctuary relieve the offender within its walls. In this world view, such forgiveness or reprieve is necessary, for without it, human beings live their lives in an endlessly descending spiral into sin with no way to placate the ultimate demands of justice, and Christ's role gives hope of protection from the punishment for sin. So the violation of sanctuary implied a rejection of Christ's role in human life, a rejection which denies one of the most fundamental aspect of Christianity.

Besides these specifically religious aspects of sanctuary, there are other reasons for its existence. Sanctuary was a place set apart from the rest of the world, the only earthly location to which one could confidently flee from worldly dangers. As a result of its distinct and sacred nature, sanctuary became the locus from which the people could order their world. Mircea Eliade writes of sacred space in general: "The manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world. In the homogenous and infinite expanse, in which no point of reference is possible and hence no *orientation* can be established, the hierophany reveals an absolute fixed point, a center."<sup>6</sup> Christian

<sup>5</sup> *Ecclesiastical Administration in Medieval England: The Anglo-Saxons to the Reformation* (U of Notre Dame P, 1977), 53.

<sup>6</sup> *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959), 21. Whether we can universalize this process for all

sacred space, of which sanctuary was an important form, separates the ordered, human world from the unorganized, chaotic expanse of space. In the Christian world view, such a place was necessary, because sanctuary was in a sense a microcosm of the universe as a whole in its portrayal of a holy refuge and in its distinction between the sacred and non-sacred. For Christian culture, sacred space is the most significant part of the world we inhabit. The sacred, otherworldly space is truly substantial, because it is eternal; whereas the non-sacred, worldly space is less substantial, because it is transient. This notion concurs with the medieval ideas of *contemptus mundi* and *memento mori* that constantly reminded the faithful that the next world is much more important than this world. Although by More's time the secular had increased in importance, sanctuary remained significant, and its cultural role had changed little over time.

Even the structure of most sanctuaries supported the idea of shelter and separation from the outside world. The physical enclosure provided an actual and symbolic protection. Literally, as is true of any enclosed space, sanctuary protected those within from the outside environment. Sanctuary separated inside from outside and sacralized the inner space, leaving the space outside unorganized and chaotic. Such structures often formed a kind of circle, denoting an inside and outside, dividing the world between the known and familiar and the unknown and unfamiliar.<sup>7</sup> Symbolically, the protection sanctuary afforded from the natural environment resembled the legal, corporeal, and spiritual protection sanctuary also afforded.

During More's time, English sanctuary differed little from sanctuary elsewhere. Even the king's business took its place behind the rights of sanctuary. Thomas de' Mazzinghi notes that after Peter Perkin accused Henry VII of murder and then fled into sanctuary the king "respected the sanctuary."<sup>8</sup> In addition, Robert E. Rodes, Jr.

cultures, as Eliade does, is not at issue here, because Eliade's observations are certainly applicable to Christian sacred space.

<sup>7</sup> For similar examples of this phenomenon, see Richard C. Poulson's chapter "Circumference and Center: The Enigma of Sacred Space," in *The Pure Experience of Order* (U of New Mexico P, 1982), 116-124.

<sup>8</sup> de' Mazzinghi, 68.

underscores sanctuary's importance when he states that anyone seeking sanctuary "could be subjected to ecclesiastical censures despite the general principle of no censure for anything done in execution of the king's business."<sup>9</sup> The laws protecting sanctuary were occasionally violated, but as Isobel D. Thornley suggests, violations carried with them severe "ecclesiastical censures," and a person in sanctuary "could not be taken out without the penalty of excommunication being incurred by the violator."<sup>10</sup> Excommunication was an extreme punishment. Norman MacLaren Trenholme emphasizes the power of this punishment when he writes:

The Church in those days had such a hold on men's minds, and the age was one of such superstition and fear of Divine vengeance, that the curse of a priest was more dreadful than a foeman's steel, the possible vengeance of an angry God more terrible than the wrath of man. Thus when the Church said that those who sought her protection must be treated with leniency and mercy, and their lives and persons spared, no State nor individual was strong enough or bold enough to refuse to comply.<sup>11</sup>

Excommunication deprived one of the grace-filled sacraments necessary to return to God, and unless great restitution were made, the excommunicate was cut off from ordered, sacralized space and forced to inhabit unordered, chaotic space with no opportunity for protection from dangers in this world or in the next. Such a penalty was significant in two ways. First, in violating sanctuary, one took a person out of the protection of sanctified space and made that person vulnerable to the dangers of the non-sacralized, chaotic world. Second, in being cast out from the sacraments of the Church, the excommunicate suffered a similar end, and so the fates of violator and violated were analogous (an important aspect of medieval

<sup>9</sup> *Lay Authority and Reformation in the English Church: Edward I to the Civil War* (U of Notre Dame P, 1982), 30.

<sup>10</sup> "The Destruction of Sanctuary," in *Tudor Studies Presented by the Board of Studies in History in the University of London to Albert Frederick Pollard*, ed. R. W. Seton-Watson (London: Longman, Green, 1924), 182.

<sup>11</sup> Trenholme, 392.

jurisprudence). In addition, excommunication underscores the severity of the crime and demonstrates how important sanctuary was to the general population.

In some cultures, the right to sanctuary was almost universal, as with the Greeks; in others, for example among the Israelites, it was more restricted. In England, as in ancient Greece, a great breadth of offenses were permitted sanctuary. Even so, the privilege "did not cover those guilty of sacrilege or high treason."<sup>12</sup> In committing sacrilege, a person disordered the universe, since the Christian world view was based on the divine, and the divine was order. By committing sacrilege, a person tried to unmake the world, as it were. Eliade says that "consecrating a territory is equivalent to making it a cosmos, to *cosmicizing* it. For, in fact, the erection of an altar at Agni is nothing but the reproduction —on the microcosmic scale— of the Creation."<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the sanctuary of that time can be viewed as an imitation of the Creation in providing refuge from the chaos of non-sacralized space. Therefore, to admit a person guilty of sacrilege into sanctuary would be to desacralize sacred space, thus de-centering the Christian universe. In addition to refusing sanctuary to those guilty of sacrilege, the Tudors added a similar ban on traitors, and there is good reason for such a ban because of the unique position the king held. If the king was divinely appointed and the Lord's anointed,<sup>14</sup> high treason was sacrilege, because it threatened both God's chosen representative and further disorder in an already chaotic, non-sacralized world.

Finally, that people in general were willing to accept some abuses of sanctuary rights is significant. In *Richard III*, the Duke of Buckingham says:

Thieves bring thither their stolen goods and there live thereon.  
There devise they new robberies; nightly they steal out; they  
rob and reve [plunder] and kill, and come in again as though

<sup>12</sup> Thornley, 183.

<sup>13</sup> Eliade, 30.

<sup>14</sup> Regardless of whether all monarchs believed they were divinely appointed, they recognized the importance of the concept to the culture and used the "by the grace of God" formula as a powerful political tool.

those places gave them not only, a safeguard for the harm they have done, but a license also to do more. (31)

Yet unless these criminals were caught outside the walls of their place of refuge, they could not be punished legally. Buckingham, noting this contradiction between the rights of sanctuary and the protection of criminals, argues that sanctuary should not be extended to all cases (31-32). Nevertheless, most people were willing to accept this necessary evil in order to avoid the loss of sanctuary, for its abolition would have been not only sacrilege but also a disturbance in in their world view. The destruction of sanctuary threatened to introduce chaos, thereby secularizing the sacred. Because of its representative position, sanctuary's violation also implied metonymically the violation of a universal Christian order by homogenizing space, such that distinctions between spatial elements are not possible. In the sacred nature of sanctuary, the spatial is so closely tied to the spiritual that to lose distinctions in the one is to lose distinctions in the other, so that sacred and secular, right and wrong, reality and unreality, good and evil even, would become indistinguishable from one another.

## II

*The History of King Richard III* contains one of the strongest demonstrations of the place sanctuary commanded in the English mind of the time –because of the unique role of Christianity, because of More's extensive treatment of sanctuary, and because of the events surrounding the action that occurs in *Richard III*.

The church permeated daily life in More's time. Regardless of the presence or absence of personal devotion of individuals, the church's presence was pervasive, and so a blow at the heart of Christianity would have been extreme in its effects.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the general connection between Christianity and sanctuary, specific points exist in More's *History* that emphasize sanctuary's role. His characters' comments on sanctuary play a large part in this emphasis. In fact, Walter M. Gordon argues convincingly that More uses the

<sup>15</sup> More's own religious beliefs further emphasize the importance of the religious context of the events he relates.

religious nature of Westminster Abbey to underscore the significance of his characters' comments on sanctuary.<sup>16</sup> They all agree on sanctuary's importance and hotly debate its possible violation. The Archbishop of York [Canterbury]<sup>17</sup> remarks of Queen Elizabeth and her son: "Howbeit if she could be in no wise entreated with her good will to deliver him, then thought he and such other as were of the spirituality present that it were not in any wise to be attempted to take him out against her will" (27). Despite Richard's wishes otherwise, the archbishop hesitates to force the queen to relinquish her son from sanctuary and goes on to argue: "For it would be a thing that should turn to the great grudge of all men, and high displeasure of God, if the privilege of that holy place should now be broken, which had so many years be kept, which both kings and popes so good had granted, so many had confirmed" (27-28). However, not just the violation of sanctuary in general concerns the archbishop. The sanctuary of Westminster Abbey in particular was unusually significant, and he refers to the abbey as "holy ground [that] was more than five hundred year ago by Saint Peter, his own person in spirit, accompanied with great multitude of angels, by night so specially hallowed and dedicate to God" (28). Because Saint Peter's spirit itself specially dedicated Westminster Abbey, the archbishop argues that "from that time hitherward was there never so undevout a king that durst that sacred place violate, or so holy a bishop that durst it presume to consecrate" (28). He then concludes by saying, "And therefore God forbid that any man should for anything earthly enterprise to break the immunity and liberty of that sacred sanctuary that hath been the safeguard of so many a good man's life." (28)

Even the Duke of Buckingham hesitates to break sanctuary. He says, "[L]et us take a pain therewith and let it a God's name stand in force, as far forth as reason will" (31). He goes on to argue that removing the prince would not be a violation of sanctuary. But even if Buckingham really thinks nothing of violating sanctuary and merely

<sup>16</sup> "The Religious Edifice and Its Symbolism in the Writings of Erasmus, Colet, and More," *Moreana* 87-88 (November 1985): 20-21.

<sup>17</sup> Sylvester notes this reference to be a mistake and that it is the Archbishop of Canterbury speaking not the Archbishop of York (27 ff.).

repeats conventional views on the subject for his listeners' benefit, he recognizes the concern of the clergy and general population with its violation, and in fact he does not try to argue away the right of sanctuary itself but rather its application in this particular instance (31-33).

The queen's comments about the holy right of sanctuary are the strongest and most telling concerning its role in the minds of the people:

"[I]n what place could I reckon him sure, if he be not sure in this the sanctuary whereof was there never tyrant yet so devilish that durst presume to break? . . . I can [know] no more, but whosoever he be that breaketh this holy sanctuary, I pray God shortly send him need of sanctuary when he may not come to it. For taken out of sanctuary would I not my mortal enemy were." (37-38, 40)

The queen presents the violation of sanctuary as a terrible act, one that not even the most "devilish" of tyrants (38) would commit and one that she would not even wish on her "mortal enemy" (40). By pointing out that even the worst tyrant had not dared to break sanctuary, she shows how terrible its violation appeared to the people of that time. More does not vacillate on the heinous nature of breaking sanctuary, because despite the historical existence of some breaches of sanctuary (several of them at Westminster Abbey),<sup>18</sup> not a breath of this possibility exists in *Richard III*; rather More polarizes the issue when both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the queen claim that such a violation has never taken place. By denying the breach of Westminster Abbey's sanctuary, More implies that only Richard is undevout enough to break sanctuary when he removes his nephew. Michael Hicks correctly argues that Richard's contemplated violation of sanctuary "would have indelibly blackened his reputation and taken a step from which there was no withdrawal,"<sup>19</sup> so Richard's breach of sanctuary becomes particularly damning evidence to readers steeped

<sup>18</sup> For accounts of violations of sanctuary and their consequences, see Pegge, 36-39; Cox, 34-47; Trenholme, 72-84; and de' Mazzinghi, 70-85.

<sup>19</sup> *Richard III: The Man behind the Myth* (London: Collins & Brown, 1991), 92.

in the religious culture of that time. And although Richard does not physically remove his nephew from sanctuary, he does coerce the queen into surrendering her son. As a result, if not in act, certainly in spirit, Richard violates sanctuary, and his actions and attitude reveal his willingness to break sanctuary if necessary. More emphasizes the seriousness of Richard's actions when the queen says, "I say he that against my will taketh out him, breaketh the sanctuary" (38). She remains unconvinced by the arguments she hears and relents only when she feels she has no choice: "[T]he protector [Richard] himself [was] ready at hand, so that she verily thought she could not keep him [her son] there" (40).<sup>20</sup>

Besides the prolonged discussion of sanctuary, other aspects of this discussion highlight its importance to that culture and to the events of More's history. The people saw Westminster Abbey as the most powerful sanctuary and used it as the model for all others.<sup>21</sup> Like many sanctuaries, its structure brings with it the protective symbolism of enclosed space. In addition, More's use of Westminster Abbey evokes similarities between sanctuary and the womb. Both sanctuary and the womb represent protection and nurturing as well as complete vulnerability outside the enclosure. More's narrative particularly emphasizes this analogy because Richard takes his nephew not only from sanctuary but also from his mother's protection. More makes use of the similarities between the two to underscore the seriousness of

<sup>20</sup> In fact, More's Latin version of *Richard III* notes that armed men were outside the sanctuary. Similarly, Dominic Mancini writes that Richard "surrounded the sanctuary with troops. When the queen saw herself besieged and preparation for violence, she surrendered her son." *The Usurpation of Richard the Third*, trans. and ed. C. A. J. Armstrong (Gloucester, England: Alan Sutton, 1989), 89. Also, most commentators agree that Richard does in fact violate sanctuary. For example, James Gairdner writes, "[T]he general impression derived from both accounts [More and the *Croyland Chronicles*] is very much the same. There were persuasions urged which it was needless [for the queen] to resist, for there was force in the background to give effect to them." *History of the Life and Reign of Richard the Third*, rev. ed. (Cambridge UP, 1898), 77; Charles Ross writes, "As regards Richard of York, she had little choice. Persuasion was backed by force. The sanctuary had been surrounded by numbers of armed men, and it is scarcely possible to doubt that, if the queen had not listened to official reason, Richard would have risked the oral obloquy of forcing the sanctuary." *Richard III* (U of California P, 1981), 87; Judith P. Jones writes that Richard "makes it clear that if she does not comply peacefully, her son will be taken from her by force." *Thomas More* (Boston: Twayne, 1979), 51.

<sup>21</sup> See Thornley, 199 and Cox, 48-71.

Richard's act. Because the prince is young and defenseless and because he is analogous to the child untimely taken from its mother's womb, he becomes representative of all people of that time in their danger outside the protection of sanctuary and the ordered Christian world sanctuary signified.<sup>22</sup>

The relationship between sanctuary and More's Christian world, the lengthy debate about sanctuary in his narrative, and the physical and psychological significance of sanctuary are all important to *Richard III*, but sanctuary is most significant in its portrayal of the extremely graphic devastation resulting from its violation. Despite the ominous feeling in the air before Richard takes the prince from sanctuary, only after his departure do destruction and chaos reign throughout the land. Once Richard breaks sanctuary, the realm becomes almost immediately chaotic, both through the doubt cast on the lineal legitimacy of Richard's nephews and through Richard's usurpation and the battles that follow, and according to Tudor tradition, only the victory of Henry VII over the slain tyrant brings order again to the realm.

Because of the importance of sanctuary, both to More's work and to the culture in which it was written, one of More's greatest attacks against Richard III comes by way of Richard's violation of sanctuary. Showing that Richard violates the rights of holy refuge, More asks his readers to witness that Richard is not only a usurper who threatens their political realm (as Tudor tradition argued) but also a destroyer of their entire world view—an anti-Christ as it were. As a result of Richard's destruction of Edward V and his brother (his own nephews), his bringing the realm into war, and his violation of sanctuary, Richard becomes both temporal and spiritual agent of chaos and destruction.<sup>23</sup>



<sup>22</sup> Also important is that next to Edward V, Prince Richard was heir to the throne, so that violence against Edward's brother also implies violence against the crown.

<sup>23</sup> His sympathetic presentation of sanctuary may be one of the reasons why *Richard III* was never published during More's lifetime, since Henry VII and Henry VIII brought about nearly the complete destruction of sanctuary in England.